



DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC SECURITY

Your Partner For A Stronger Arizona

DIVISION OF DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

Sent on Behalf of DES/DDD

COVID-19 Update

Target Audience - Qualified Vendors and Providers

Transmittal Date - 03/17/2020

As the COVID-19 situation continues to evolve in Arizona, DDD has been working closely with the Arizona Department of Health Services (ADHS) and Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System (AHCCCS) to implement measures necessary to reduce exposure and protect the health and safety of members, providers and DDD staff. The intent of this communication is to provide an update on specific actions that DDD is taking as well as updates that impact the overall DDD member and provider community.

Virtual Visits for Support Coordinators

Effective Monday, March 16, 2020, DDD Support Coordinators began to conduct their 90-day planning meetings virtually, either through video conferencing or telephone calls. The change of the meeting format follows AHCCCS guidance to leverage virtual visits whenever possible, and also follows CDC and ADHS guidelines on social distancing, while still supporting the member.

Support Coordinators will begin reaching out to members or their responsible person in advance of the scheduled meeting date to inquire about their health and to ask them about participating in the meeting via video conference or telephone. If the member/responsible person agrees, the Support Coordinator will contact all required attendees, alert them of the change and provide the meeting contact information. If the member or responsible person cannot be reached by phone, staff will send a letter to the member via USPS or email with the date and time of the scheduled meeting as well as the call-in information.

If the member or responsible person chooses not to participate in the meeting via video conference or telephone and prefers the meeting being held in person, the Support Coordinator will contact their supervisor. Their supervisor will then work with DDD leadership to identify a solution that protects the health and safety of all parties. The Support Coordinator will keep other required meeting attendees informed with updates.

Guidance to Long Term Care Facilities and DDD Group Homes

To mitigate spread of COVID-19 among our most vulnerable Arizonans, the Governor's Executive Order issued on March 11, 2020 directs ADHS to make emergency rules for skilled nursing, intermediate care, and assisted living facilities to implement visitor policies designed to prevent the spread of COVID-19 including:

- Instituting policies to require screening and triage before entry by staff, visitors, vendors, and contractors;
- Establishing disinfectant schedules for frequently touched surfaces; and
- Establishing policies of distancing patients who exhibit symptoms of COVID-19 from other patients in common areas.

DDD has followed up with its Contracted Assisted Living Facilities (ALFs), Intermediate Care Facilities (ICFs),

its sub-contracted Health Plans that operate Skilled Nursing Facilities (SNFs) and its own State Operated Intermediate Care Facilities to ensure that these measures are implemented. DDD has also strongly encouraged its Group Homes to carry out similar procedures.

ADHS has also issued guidance today that there should not be visits to long-term care facilities except to provide critical assistance.

Impact to HCBS Services

As of March 16, 2020; there has been no directive for vendors to stop providing any HCBS services. Given the temporary state-wide closure of schools, many vendors have reached out to determine whether the closure also applies to Day Treatment Programs, Employment Programs or other services. Those programs may continue. It is recommended that members with compromised immune systems or who are more susceptible to respiratory illness remain home rather than attend day services outside the home. It is also recommended that protocols and guidance issued by CDC and ADHS be implemented and followed, including:

- Educate staff about everyday preventive actions, such as staying home when sick, covering coughs and sneezes with a tissue, and washing their hands often with soap and water.
- Communicate with your staff to:
- Inform staff about sick-leave policies.
- Reinforce the importance of staying home when they are sick.
- Monitor and screen staff and members for symptoms such as coughing, signs of fever, etc.
- When members become ill, they need to be isolated and sent home
- Encourage environmental cleaning of surfaces and objects that are frequently touched at home or in group homes: Telephones, desks, remotes, keyboards, and doorknobs
 - You can also use a bleach-and-water solution (0.1% solution; 1:50 dilution) or disinfectant with a label that says “EPA approved” for killing viruses and bacteria. Always follow directions on product labels.

Communication with families and members to reinforce the importance of people staying home or in their room when they are sick.

If a vendor determines that it has become necessary to change the service delivery for a specific member or at a specific service location, they should follow the guidance issued in last week’s vendor blast about [Pandemic Performance Plan Service Delivery Changes](#). We understand that some vendors are still waiting on their responses from the DDDQMUDocs@azdes.gov inbox. Your inquiries, requests, and notifications will be addressed shortly.

Telehealth

DDD is authorizing the use of telehealth to deliver Speech Therapy and Occupational Therapy services as outlined in AHCCCS Policy 320-I <https://www.azahcccs.gov/shared/Downloads/MedicalPolicyManual/300/320-I.pdf>.

Further guidance on billing procedures will be provided in future communications.

Suspension of Some Licensing, Monitoring, and Certification Requirements.

Effective immediately, DDD will be suspending onsite monitoring. In lieu of onsite monitoring, DDD will be conducting reviews via a desk audit (to the extent possible). In addition, we will be providing additional guidance and tools to support these efforts in the coming days.

All immediate health & safety checks will proceed uninterrupted. DDD will maintain investigative efforts for

serious health and safety threats (e.g. allegations of abuse).

Also effective immediately, DDD-OLCR will be suspending the following types of life safety inspections until further notice:

- Renewal of developmental home license inspections, OLCR will utilize the most recent quarterly inspection completed by the licensing worker.
- Renewal inspections for HCBS certified settings such as:
 - Respite homes
 - Day programs
 - Group supported employment (with service sites)
 - Therapy service sites

OLCR will continue to conduct inspections for the following:

- Initial developmental home license applications and initial HCBS certified settings
- Developmental home relocation amendments
- Child developmental certified home applications

Qualified Vendor's licensing workers may conduct required monthly monitoring visits outlined in the Division's Policy Manual Chapter 51 Oversight and Monitoring of Developmental Home Services via telephone until further notice.

Training Requirements

The Division will suspend in-person Article 9 training and will use video conferencing as long as the instructor conducts the test for participants one on one by phone after the video conference.

The Division will extend all Train the Trainer certifications for 90 days past their current expiration date.

Any new providers must receive in-person training for Prevention and Support and CPR/First Aid. The Division is considering how to ensure our provider community and Division staff's safety is maintained. Further guidance will be released in the near future.

Additional Questions

We are aware that there are many additional questions currently being generated in the community pertaining to topics such as arrangements for virtual training, additional telehealth options, suspending monitoring or supervisory visit requirements, funding considerations, billing for absences, etc. At this time, DDD is working diligently to get concrete guidance on a number of these issues. In the meantime, AHCCCS has updated their [FAQ effective March 17, 2020](#). Beyond the items addressed in that FAQ, the information in this communication, and guidance from [CDC](#) and [ADHS](#); DES/DDD does not have any additional information to share at this point. We will keep you posted as we have more information to share, and we intend to be in continued contact over the days and weeks to come.

Thank you for all that you do for DDD members in the State of Arizona. We look forward to continued, close collaboration in the weeks ahead to ensure the best outcomes for DDD members, their families, and the professionals in our system.

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